

Claim Amendments:

1. (Currently Amended) A safety scalpel blade assembly adapted for attachment to a handle of the type which has a blade carrier in the form of a finger, the assembly comprising a scalpel blade which can be of conventional manufacture, the scalpel blade having a slot to allow the blade to be attached to the blade carrier on the handle, and a guard which extends at least about the cutting edge of the blade, the guard having attachment means to lock the blade to the guard as the assembly is being attached to the handle and which releases the blade from the guard when the blade is attached to the blade carrier on the handle, and a removable tab on the guard having a portion which can be gripped by a person, ~~the tab preventing a cutting edge of the blade from becoming exposed.~~

a slot formed in said guard,

said removable tab comprising a head portion, a tail portion, and a lip defined between said head portion and said tail portion,

the head portion of said tab extending forwardly of the blade assembly, the tail portion extending rearwardly at least partially into the slot in said guard, and the lip extending downwardly from said head portion to prevent the cutting edge of said blade from becoming exposed prior to removal of the tab,

said head portion of said tab being gripped by a person to remove said head and free said tail portion from the slot in the guard to expose the cutting edge of said blade.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Previously Presented) The assembly as claimed in claim 1, wherein the removable tab is attached to the guard via at least one breakable portion.

4. (Previously Presented) The assembly as claimed in claim 3, wherein the breakable portion comprises a first breakable portion (a first neck) and a second breakable portion (a second neck).
5. (Previously Presented) The assembly as claimed in claim 4, wherein the first breakable portion is closer to the head portion of the removable tab and breaks more easily than the second breakable portion.
6. (Previously Presented) The assembly as claimed in claim 1, comprising anti-lift means to reduce the ability of the blade guard from lifting relative to the handle.
7. (Previously Presented) The assembly as claimed in claim 6, wherein the anti-lift means comprises an engagement means on the handle which engages the guard.
8. (Previously Presented) The assembly as claimed in claim 7, wherein the engagement means comprises an elongated rib or rail in the handle, and a corresponding groove or slot in the guard (or vice versa) such that the guard can slide between the forward and the retracted position but is held against being lifted by the engagement of the rib or rail in the groove or slot.
9. (Currently Amended) The assembly as claimed in claim 1, comprising a safety catch to prevent excessive retraction of the guard, the safety catch being positioned on a forward part of the guard and comprising a projection.
10. (Currently Amended) The assembly as claimed in claim 1, comprising a location means to positively locate the guard in the extended position and the retracted position.

11. (Previously Presented) The assembly as claimed in claim 10, wherein the location means comprises at least one projection which releasably engages in at least one recess when the guard is in the extended position and the retracted position.

12. (Previously Presented) A safety scalpel assembly comprising a scalpel blade and a guard, the assembly being attachable to a handle of the type which has a blade carrier in the form of a finger, the scalpel blade having a slot to allow the blade to be attached to the blade carrier on the handle, and the guard extending at least about the cutting edge of the blade, the guard having attachment means to lock the blade to the guard as the assembly is being attached to the handle and which releases the blade from the guard when the blade is attached to the blade carrier on the handle, the guard moveable relative to the blade between an extended position, wherein the guard extends about the cutting edge of the blade, and a retracted position, wherein the blade is exposed, and anti-lift means to reduce the guard from lifting relative to the handle when the guard is moved between the extended and retracted positions, the anti-lift means comprising an elongate recess in the guard and a rib located within a recess on one side of the handle, the rib extending along the longitudinal axis of the handle and in line with the finger, the rib extending through the elongate recess in the guard upon retraction and extension of the guard.

13. (Previously Presented) The safety scalpel assembly of claim 12, further characterized by a safety catch to prevent excessive retraction of the guard, the safety catch being positioned on a forward part of the guard and comprising a peg extending outwardly from one side of the guard and able to engage with part of the handle to prevent excessive retraction of the guard.

14. (Previously Presented) The safety scalpel assembly of claim 12, further characterized by a location means, the location means comprising a projection on the guard which extends inwardly such that retraction of the guard causes the projection to ride over part of the blade and part of the finger and then to snap behind part of the handle when the guard has been fully retracted, and providing an audible click sound when the projection snaps behind part of the handle.

15. (Previously Presented) A safety scalpel comprising a handle of the type which has a blade carrier in the form of a finger, a scalpel blade which can be of conventional manufacture and which has a slot such that the scalpel blade is attached to the blade carrier of the handle, and a guard which extends about the cutting edge of the blade when the guard is in the extended position, and which exposes the blade when the guard is in the retracted position, the handle having a recess on one side of the handle, the invention being characterized by an anti-lift means comprising a longitudinal rib located within the recess that is in line with the finger, the guard containing a longitudinal recess, whereby upon retraction and extension of the guard, the longitudinal rib extends through the longitudinal recess of the guard.